PHILIPPINE SOLDIERS FIRE ON PORTEST,KILLING 14

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Fourteen people were shot and killed by soldiers today in a town 300 miles south of here during protests marking the anniversary of martial law. Officials said the troops had opened fire in self-defense.

It was the worst such violence in the 20 years of President Ferdinand E. Marcos's rule since the opposition leader Benigno S. Aquino Jr. was killed in Manila in 1983, witnesses and authorities said.

The incident, in Escalante on the sugar-growing island of Negros, occurred during one of many demonstrations by thousands of people on the eve of the 13th anniversary of martial law. Nearly 200 people were reported to have been arrested. The Marcos Government imposed martial law Sept. 21, 1972. It was lifted in 1981, but critics say the President has retained the powers of a dictator.

Military authorities in Escalante said soldiers fired on 15,000 protesters after the demonstrators fought off efforts to disperse them with fire hoses and tear gas.

'Unfortunate Incident'

Two-way radio reports monitored in Bacolod, a provincial capital on Negros, said that as many as 23 people might have died. Military authorities said 12 men and 2 women were killed, all by gunshots.

"The unfortunate incident happened because our men had to protect themselves," Brig. Gen. Isidro de Guzman, the regional military commander, said in a television interview.

General de Guzman said the demonstrators had tried to grab weapons from policemen and soldiers. Witnesses interviewed by radio confirmed that the crowd had fought the police. They said many in the crowd had applauded and mocked soldiers when they fired guns into the air.

An army unit spokesman, Capt. Fortunato Serafin, said soldiers fired when they saw a man who appeared ready to hurl a grenade. The captain said weapons had been confiscated from the protesters.

Protest in Capital

In Manila, about 2,000 students blocked streets near President Marcos's palace and burned effigies of President Reagan and President Marcos. The students were protesting what they said was repression by the Government and plans for a law that would require students to take courses on patriotism.

Elsewhere in the Philippines, thousands protested what they said have been the growing power of the military and human rights abuses under Mr. Marcos.

In Cebu, the second largest city, soldiers with fire hoses dispersed demonstrators who had formed human barricades and tried to force a citywide strike. The police said 172 people had been arrested and hauled off to an army camp in a dump truck.

Their fate was not immediately known.

Captain Serafin said only about 10 soldiers had been at the scene of the shootings in Escalante, but witnesses said there had been more. The estimate of 15,000 demonstrators was given by the Government press agency.

High Unemployment

Negros has been hit hard by the near collapse of the Philippine sugar industry, and the economic hardship has created increasing unrest among 250,000 unemployed sugar workers.

The Philippines' previous most violent demonstration was Sept. 21, 1983, when 11 people were killed as the police chased demonstrators away from President Marcos's palace a month after Mr. Aquino was assassinated.

More rallies, strikes and marches are scheduled in Bacolod and other cities on Saturday, which is celebrated as "Thanksgiving Day" by the Government. It is called a "day of sorrow" by members of the activist group Bayan, which organized most of the protests.

The acting armed forces chief, Lieut. Gen. Fidel V. Ramos, placed the country's 200,000 military personnel on nationwide alert. A military spokesman said the action was routine on national holidays.